

The Predecessors of the Human Race.

An article in the first number of the North British Review has recently appeared, ascribed to Dr. Pyle Smyth. It brings before us some striking facts and solemn reasoning on the various creations which philosophers supposed to have preceded the formation of man. The doctor refers to the memoir read by Cuvier in 1796, at the first sitting of the National Institute, "On the species of fossil elephants, compared with living species," in which he demonstrates that the fossil elephant differs from all living species, and that it is an extinct species, now lost. He undertook to prove the like with respect to other animals. "May we ask," said he, "why we find so many remains of unknown animals, whilst we can find none which we can rank among the species which we know? We may see how probable it is that they have all belonged to the beings of a world anterior to ours—to beings destroyed by revolutions of the earth, and to beings which have been replaced by existing species."

Surrounded by the *exuvie* of former creations, the task assigned to Cuvier, the article goes on to state, was to restore the fragments to their former positions. By great labor, he succeeded in tracing their connection, and re-established 168 vertebral animals, which form fifty distinct generations, of which fifteen are entirely new; and reckoning the additions which have since been made, there is reason to believe that the species of extinct animals are more numerous than the living ones.

But Cuvier found that the differences of structure between fossil and recent animals increase with the age of the deposit in which the former are found, and that these differences mark the age of the deposits themselves. As the primitive rocks exhibit no traces of plants or animals, he concluded that there was a time when no living beings existed upon the earth; and that, before the creation of man, the world was inhabited by at least three different generations of animals, which had been successively created and destroyed.

It is supposed with reason, if the subject be not too grand for our feeble reason, that the creation of vegetable bodies preceded the creation of the animals that were to devour them. The stately pine, the gigantic equester, and the lofty palm, waved in the primeval forests, and the sea and the land were inhabited only by a small number of the marine mammalia, and scarcely any of the terrestrial mammalia.

We then arrive at this startling conclusion, that among the earliest inhabitants of the globe were reptiles of enormous magnitude, the Megalosaurus, being upwards of seventy feet long; the Ichthyosaurus, above thirty feet in length; the Plesiosaurus, an animal combining the trunk of an ordinary quadruped, with a neck like the body of a serpent, the head of a lizard, the teeth of a crocodile, and the paddles of a whale; and the Pterodactyle, the most extraordinary of extinct animals, uniting the character of a bird, a reptile, and a quadruped!

In the second period the terrestrial mammalia increase in number, and we have along with them numerous Pachydermata or animals with thick skins, such as the Paecothidium and Anopelotherium, and other genera of aquatic animals which dwelt on the margin of lakes and rivers. In the first of these extinct genera these species vary in size, from the rhinoceros to the hog. These and other species, nearly fifty in number, were discovered by Cuvier in the fresh water formations of Montmartre near Paris.

In the third period lived the Mammoth, the Mastodon, the Hippopotamus, and those huge Sloths, the Megatherium and the Megalonyx, the giants of the natural world, the grandest and the last specimens of that extraordinary population over which man never swayed the sceptre.

The lion and tiger are supposed to be the successors of the creatures last mentioned. Up to this stage, no traces of man or his labor can be detected, and this gives the remarkable result that the three periods have been succeeded by a fourth, in which the Almighty placed man upon the earth, and created, as his subjects and his servants, three races of living beings which occupy

the surface of our globe, and inhabit the depths of its oceans.

Referring to the Mosaic record of the creation, the article to which we have referred, comes to this conclusion: "The records of faith now stand on the same level with the records of reason. Truth, brought down from on high, harmonizes with truth from below; and the christian who refuses to surrender his cherished volume to the taunts of reason, now holds it with a firmer grasp, and scans the series of creations which science has revealed, but as the harbinger of that latest exercise of divine power which gave birth to man, and placed him over a new animal world."

"But the confirmation of the Mosaic account of the creation is not the only, or even the chief result of geological discovery. The commencement of organic life in plants and animals of the first period, and its higher and progressive development in different orders, leads us back to that beginning which was so long veiled from human reason; while the successive destruction of successive creations carries us forward to the terminus of our own period—to that 'day of the Lord, when the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with a fervent heat, and the earth also, and the works which are therein, shall be burned up.'"

The Omnipotent may have designs to work out, of which we, and all we behold, are but the preliminary instruments. To us, it is possible commanding beings will succeed, as different from us as the lion is from the megalosaurus, more superior to us than we are to the monkey.

We need say nothing to fix the reader's mind on the reflections which follow:

"Should this, apparently last period of animal life, be one in which man is to exercise his faculties in the investigation of his Maker's works, the fossil geology of the world we now inhabit will exhibit deposits no less interesting than those which embosom the gigantic frame-work of mammoths and mastodons. How interesting will be the excavations in which the buried cities of modern Europe will reappear in their ruined grandeur; how strange the discovery of submerged navies embalmed in their ocean beds, or the foundered ship with its imprisoned skeletons; or the battle field, with its prostrate warriors; or the hallowed cemetery, crowded with the relics of youth and age, and crushed beneath their tablets of marble, and their monuments of bronze!"

More Annexation.

A new treaty with Mexico—very different in every important particular from that which has been for some days pretended by a journal of this city—has actually been negotiated by Gen. Gadsden, and is now in the hands of the Cabinet. It gives us a narrow strip of territory across the north end of Mexico—hardly twenty miles wide at this end, but widening after passing out of the valley of the Rio Grande, where there is some good land that Santa Anna decided to keep. In all, we acquire a strip averaging some sixty miles in width and running across to the Gulf of California, for which and the extinction of the claims of Mexico under the stipulation of the last treaty which obliges us to pay for all the damage which Mexicans may suffer at the hands of the amiable savages we bought of her by that treaty, we are to pay twenty millions! That is to say: By one treaty we bought the Camanches and their cut-throat neighbors, and agreed to pay for what damage they might do thereafter; by the other, we pay five millions for the damage they have already done and fifteen millions more for a strip of territory over which to make a railroad (if we please) whereby it is somehow calculated that they are to be deterred from plundering Mexicans hereafter. All the territory we acquire by this new treaty would be horribly dear at two millions of dollars; but we presume "democracy" will put it through, and that there is no use in saying anything about it.—[N. Y. Tribune.]

A MAGNIFICENT RIVER.—The MURRAY river in Australia, is navigable for vessels 1200 miles from sea. Vessels had ascended that distance; the navigation was perfectly safe, the depth of water varying from 18 to 36 feet.

PROCLAMATION BY THE PRESIDENT.—The President of the United States has issued the following proclamation:

WHEREAS, information has been received by me that an unlawful expedition has been fitted out in the state of California with a view to invade Mexico, a nation maintaining friendly relations with the United States, and that other expeditions are organizing within the United States for the same unlawful purpose; and, whereas, certain citizens and inhabitants of this country, unmindful of their obligations and duties, and of the rights of a friendly power, have participated, and are about to participate in these enterprises so derogatory to our national character, and so threatening to our tranquility, and are thereby incurring the severe penalties imposed by law against such offenders:

Now, therefore, I, Franklin Pierce, president of the United States, have issued this, my proclamation, warning all persons who shall connect themselves with any such enterprise or expedition, that the penalties of the law denounced against such criminal conduct will be rigidly enforced. And I exhort all good citizens, as they regard our national character—as they respect our laws or the laws of nations—as they value the blessings of peace and the welfare of the country, to discountenance, and by all lawful means to prevent such criminal enterprises. And I call upon all officers of this government, civil and military, to use any efforts which may be in their power to arrest for trial and punishment every such offender.

Given under my hand and the seal of the United States, at Washington, this eighteenth day of January, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and fifty-four, and the seventy-eighth of the independence of the United States. FRANKLIN PIERCE.

By the President:
WM. L. MARCY, Secretary of State.

Ruinous Taxes.

The subject of the enormous taxes collected in Ohio, is strongly complained of in every part of the State. E. W. Slade, in the Forest City Democrat, says that his taxes now are 15 fold more than they were 13 years ago, when the State debt was heavier than now, and of course more interest to be paid. He says, \$25 for every tax payer; \$6, for every man, woman and child in Ohio, and with the recommendation of Gov. Medill, to add \$1,000,000 a year, our prospects are sickening and paralyzing. He urges township meetings to be called, and petitions signed and sent asking a redress of grievances and taxes; and urges the abolishment of useless offices, and reduction of salaries, and remodelling the manner of repairing the public works.

An old man, who has paid taxes 60 years, says that they are higher now than ever before. He in 1849 sold his real property at a low price and on long credit. The notes given for it are taxed and the property is taxed, the first \$37.50; the latter \$38. On an income of 290, he paid last year in taxes \$71.61. He has determined to leave the State as soon as he can.

The editor of the Elevator says of the tax law: Every sale of real estate to a poor man, upon credit, actually doubles the amount of taxable property. A. sells 160 acres of land to B. for \$10,000. B. pays \$1,000 down, and gives notes for the balance. B. has to pay the taxes on the valuation of the land, and A. on the notes and the \$1,000 besides. Thus the taxable property is doubled, but as a certain sum of money only is to be raised by taxation, B. pays upon what he owes, while A. pays upon what he owns—and his taxes are reduced just 50 per cent., while B's are increased 90 per cent.

This law oppresses the poor man—and few pay their just proportion of taxes under it.—[Ohio Repository.]

APPLYING THE SCALE.—A gentleman, no Solon, having purchased a map with some animals peculiar to the country engraved on it, astonished his friends by boldly affirming that these creatures were several miles in length. Being asked for proof, he coolly produced the map, and taking the length of one of the animals in the compasses, applied it to the scale. "There," said he, "can anything be clearer than that?"

Biennial Legislative Sessions.

Nearly all of those states which have, within the past few years, remodelled their constitutions, have provided for biennial sessions of their legislatures. This change has been made in accordance with a very general popular feeling, regarding annual sessions as inconvenient and unnecessarily expensive, without adding anything to the benefits to be derived from legislation. Recently, however, the expediency of this change, upon the ground of economy, as well as convenience, has been questioned. It is said that some of the southern states have become dissatisfied with their biennial sessions, and are advocating a return to yearly meetings of their legislatures. Gov. Cobb, of Georgia, in his late message, earnestly recommends this change in the constitutional provision of that state.

In Ohio some of the leading papers are beginning to refer to this subject in such terms as evidently to indicate a preference for a return to annual sessions. The excellent provision in our constitution, relieving the legislature from the large amount of local legislation which they formerly had to do, together with general incorporation acts, we think will make biennial sessions of that body all that the people of the state will desire. We are well satisfied that there is great danger of too much legislation, and that the yearly revisions which have heretofore taken place in a great portion of our statutes have created greater difficulties than can possibly be produced for the want of a legislature each winter. Under our present arrangement, laws will remain in force at least two years and afford the people time to become acquainted with them before their repeal.

Until difficulties shall be found by experience to exist in the operation of our present constitutional provision upon that subject, we cannot subscribe to its alteration.—[Hancock Courier.]

SENATOR FROM MISSISSIPPI.—It seems to be conceded that A. G. Brown, has been chosen United States Senator for the State of Mississippi. This must be a very unpalatable event to Mr. Secretary Davis. He is said to have anticipated a different result with entire confidence, and just as much as six years certain to the Senate is better than three in the Cabinet, the latter office being of uncertain tenure, just so much is Mr. Davis disappointed. Brown's majority over Davis in caucus was two. Brown's success is ascribed to the agency of ex-governor Foote. Brown is quite a light man, considerably inferior to Davis, both in intellectual vigor and education. He served in the 26th Congress without distinction, and was afterwards made Governor of the State. He was again a member of Congress some four years ago. While in the House the last time, he had a violent quarrel with Dr. Gwin, one of the California Senators, which at one time was expected to lead to a duel; but the affair blew off in some way. When they meet on the floor of the Senate they can settle it by contest in debate.—[Buffalo Com. Adv.]

We are pleased to learn, as we do from the Mirror, that our townsman, J. W. Taylor, Esq., has nearly ready for press, "The Early History of Ohio"—a work to whose preparation he has devoted much time and research. As there is now no complete history of our State prior to 1787, the volume of Mr. Taylor will supply a want in our historical literature which will be particularly acceptable. Having had access to many ancient and valuable manuscripts and private memoranda, the history of Mr. T. will be as entirely original as reliable, and will find its way, we trust, into the hands of every citizen of Ohio who has an interest in her history. The volume is announced to appear about the last of February.—[Sandusky Register.]

MELANCHOLY COINCIDENCE.—The ill-fated steamer San Francisco cleared from New York, December 17th, and we find on examining the "Shipping List" that on the same day the following ships cleared, all of which have met a similar fate: Ships Commerce, Singapore, and Borneo, besides ship Saxony disabled and put into Halifax.—[N. Y. Post.]